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Fight Like a Girl: How Women's Participation Affects the Outcome of Violent Political Campaigns

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**Universiteit
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Bachelor Thesis.

**Fight Like a Girl: How Women's Participation Affects the Outcome of
Violent Political Campaigns.**

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Abstract

Though women tend to be considered victims of armed conflict, recognising their political agency is imperative for their inclusion in peacebuilding and combatant rehabilitation processes. Recent studies suggest women's presence is beneficial to mobilisation success, but it remains unclear whether this effect varies based on the roles women have. This research proposes two mechanisms to theorise why female presence in specific positions may increase a violent political campaign's likelihood of success. A *mobilisation* mechanism suggests that women can prompt mass mobilisation, loyalty shifts and strong social capital. A *legitimacy* mechanism posits that they may increase external support and resources. Correlation between female participation in frontline, symbolic or leadership roles and campaign success is tested quantitatively with an analysis of 168 violent resistance campaigns drawn from the Women in Resistance dataset. Empirical results reveal that women's presence in leadership roles may be a particular catalyst for the success of violent political campaigns. Conversely, there is no significant effect of female presence in frontline or symbolic roles on campaign outcome. This study thus contributes to the existing literature by providing a detailed analysis of women's positions in armed mobilisation. Future research could deepen understandings of the topic by operationalising campaign outcomes in a more nuanced manner.

Keywords: Political mobilisation; gender equality; women's participation; violent resistance; armed conflict; resistance campaigns; militarised movements.

Acknowledgement

To my family, for their love and support, and to my friends, for making every step of the way joyful.

Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	4
2. Literature review.....	6
3. Theoretical framework.....	10
3.1 The mobilisation mechanism.....	12
3.2 The legitimacy mechanism.....	14
4. Research design.....	17
4.1 Case and data selection.....	17
4.2 Operationalisation and statistical models.....	18
5. Empirical analysis.....	20
6. Discussion.....	24
7. Conclusion.....	27
Bibliography.....	30
Appendix.....	34

1. Introduction

Since the United Nations Security Council established the landmark Women, Peace and Security agenda with Resolution 1325 in October 2000, it has become increasingly clear that women are at the forefront of domestic and international peace and security matters (Chenoweth, Seyle & Dharmapuri, 2019). As women take part in most resistance campaigns worldwide, understanding their involvement in violent political campaigns is highly relevant to gaining a nuanced perspective of armed mobilisation and civil unrest (Braithwaite & Ruiz, 2018, p. 1; Chenoweth, 2019a, p. 3; Henshaw, 2016, p. 3). Moreover, distinguishing the roles women may undertake within violent campaigns recognises the full spectrum of their political agency.

Knowledge of female participation in armed groups at various hierarchical levels and with different duties would further politicians' understanding of how such groups function and better inform their responses to violent mobilisation. Furthermore, adopting a gendered perspective in security studies is essential for women to be effectively included in peacebuilding processes. This is particularly important in contexts where women are actively involved in armed resistance. Strategists seeking to de-escalate civil unrest must also consider how gendered societal dynamics are reflected in violent campaigns. Rather than only viewing women as victims of armed conflict, as it often happens, recognising their agency as political actors will also allow policymakers to include them in conflict resolution, disarmament, combatant rehabilitation, and post-conflict reconstruction (Alison, 2009, p. 2; Thompson, 2006, p. 343).

Though women's presence in armed conflict worldwide has long been observed, academia has overlooked female participation in violent movements until recently (Alison, 2009, pp. 1-2; Braithwaite & Ruiz, 2018, p. 1; Henshaw, 2016, p. 2). Since then, the growing scholarship on the topic has either focused on women's presence in mobilisations in general or merely on women in combat roles (Braithwaite & Ruiz, 2018; Thomas & Bond, 2015; Wood &

Thomas, 2017). Few studies have distinguished between different types of female participation in violent movements, and none have observed whether this variation affects a campaign's outcome. This paper aims to fill this gap in the academic literature by examining the influence of women's diverse roles in violent resistance on their success, posing the question of *how do different forms of women's participation affect a violent campaign's outcome?*

Based on a theoretical framework combining literature on civil and armed mobilisation, this research hypothesises that different forms of female participation in a violent movement increase the likelihood of the campaign's success through two mechanisms. The first hypothesis posits that women's presence in frontline roles makes a violent movement more likely to succeed through a *mobilisation mechanism*. A second hypothesis argues that, due to a *legitimacy mechanism*, women in symbolic roles are catalysts for a campaign's victory. Finally, two more hypotheses suggest either a positive or negative association between female leadership and the outcome of violent campaigns.

The paper begins with an overview of extant literature on women's involvement in contentious politics. It conceptualises violent political campaigns and how women may actively participate in them, and proposes two theoretical mechanisms to understand the relationship between women's roles and campaign outcomes. The ensuing four hypotheses are then tested through a large-N quantitative study with a regression analysis on a global sample of 168 violent resistance campaigns from 1945 to 2014. The resulting empirical evidence does not fully support the hypotheses, and causality between women's frontline and symbolic roles and campaign success cannot be established. Though women's involvement in leadership roles appears to increase a violent campaign's likelihood of success, this effect is not statistically significant when controlling for country fixed effects. Finally, a discussion of the research's limitations follows the analysis of its findings, and suggestions for future research are provided.

2. Literature review

Analysing the evolution of a political campaign, from its origin to its conclusion, allows for a better comprehension of what affects a movement's likelihood of success (Burstein, Einwohner & Hollander, 1995, p. 276). Research on violent and nonviolent campaigns is often gender-blind. This may be problematic, as gender dynamics arguably affect all political interactions and dynamics: social movements and their outcomes thus cannot be unaffected by female participation or the lack thereof (Bardall, Bjarnegård, & Piscopo, 2019, p. 916; Henshaw, 2016, p. 1).

Several studies explore why nonviolent movements in particular might obtain positive outcomes. Chenoweth and Stephan (2008) find that nonviolent campaigns are more successful than violent ones by testing how several variables, including resistance type, affect campaign outcomes. Similarly, Orazani and Leidner (2018, p. 689) analyse variations in social movements' effectiveness based on the collective action problem, and argue that nonviolent movements are more successful because their tactics garner support and popular mobilisation.

Though nonviolent movements appear to be more effective, some violent campaigns are successful, too (Burstein et al., 1995; Shuman et al., 2022). Studies on violent movements predominantly observe how an armed campaign's demands, methods and tactics affect its efficacy. For instance, Burstein et al. (1995, p. 294) study violent movements' success through an economic bargaining framework and posit that violent protests which are economically disruptive are more likely to succeed: their economic threat pressures business leaders, who then influence state authorities to meet the demands of protesters. However, studies investigating whether violent tactics affect campaign outcomes reach contrasting conclusions (Griffiths & Wasser, 2019; Muñoz & Anduiza, 2019; Shuman et al., 2022). Griffiths and Wasser (2019) analyse how secessionist movements' strategies affect their success and find no evidence

that violent tactics help secessionist campaigns achieve independence. Muñoz and Anduiza (2019) also claim that street violence reduces support for social movements. Conversely, Shuman et al. (2022) use a case study of 2020 Black Lives Matter protests to argue that some violent actions can increase societal support when they are embedded within a broader nonviolent movement.

The gender-blind approach that existing literature on violent and nonviolent campaigns takes may limit and influence scholars' understandings of movement leadership, organisation, composition and strategies (Gallo-Cruz, 2016, p. 825). Furthermore, research on political movements that does include a gender-sensitive perspective often minimises women's agency: security studies have long reinforced the assumption that in armed conflict, men are actors and women are passive victims (Alison, 2009, p. 2; Henshaw, 2016, pp. 2-3). Beginning in the 1990s, however, several scholars have challenged this notion and expanded the literature on women as actors of political violence, shining a light on female presence in terrorism, guerrilla groups and other movements (Alison, 2009; Baaz & Stern, 2013; Bloom, 2012; Eager, 2008; Hamilton, 2007; Kampwirth, 2002; Mason, 1992; McKay, 2005; Poloni-Staudinger & Orbals, 2018).

Literature seeking to dispel the myth of women as mere victims of armed conflict has largely focused on explaining the variation in women's participation in violent movements (Alison, 2009; Kampwirth, 2002; Mason, 1992; Thomas & Bond, 2015). Scholars propose either supply-side or demand-side explanations of why women engage in violent political action. For example, Mason (1992) and Kampwirth (2002) employ economic and political supply-side explanations to account for women in support and combat roles in Latin American guerrillas, which they argue offer a degree of financial and military protection. Similarly, Alison (2009, p. 218) finds that women join paramilitary and armed groups in ethno-national conflicts following

multi-layered cost-benefit analyses and due to their nationalist convictions. Some scholars have applied these supply-side theories of female participation to female involvement in terrorism. McKay's (2005) study of rebel groups in Northern Uganda and Sierra Leone highlights how young girls perpetrate terrorism both wilfully and under coercion. Bloom (2012) further explains that whilst some women join voluntarily as ideological martyrs, others are coerced through threats and social pressure.

More recently, Thomas and Bond (2015) have significantly contributed to this body of work by conducting the first large-N study on the variation in women's involvement across violent political organisations. Contrary to Mason's (1992), Kampwirth's (2002), and Alison's (2009) theories, they argue that it is demand-side mechanisms at the organisational level that affect female participation. Nonetheless, like previous studies, Thomas and Bond's (2015, p. 493) work lacks specificity regarding different forms of participation, as they only distinguish between female participants and women in combat roles.

Some research has partially addressed this gap: studies by Henshaw (2016) and Wood and Thomas (2017) include some distinctions between women's roles in violent movements. Henshaw (2016, pp. 4-8) purports to explain the extent to which women are involved in rebel groups and creates a typology of roles they may have: leadership, combatant, or non-combatant. The analysis finds that women are present in more than half of the examined rebel groups, are involved as combatants in one in three cases, and have leadership roles in one in four cases (Henshaw, 2016, p. 8). Henshaw (2016), however, does not consider whether these different forms of female participation in rebel groups influence insurgency success.

Wood and Thomas (2017, pp. 31, 38) link women's roles in violent rebellion to rebel groups' political ideology: they find a positive correlation between leftist ideologies and the presence of female combatants, while Islamic groups are less likely to involve women in

combat. Though the authors claim to look at diverse types of women's involvement, they only consider variables indicating the presence and prevalence of female fighters (Wood & Thomas, 2017, p. 38). They, therefore, overlook non-combatant female participants and fail to consider differences in rank, such as between frontline and leadership roles.

Three recent studies analyse female participation in violent campaigns in relation to campaign success (Braithwaite & Ruiz, 2018; Chenoweth, 2019a; Loken, 2018). Loken (2018, p. 186) distinguishes between women in frontline, support, and leadership roles in rebel groups. The paper points to a positive association between women's overall participation and insurgency success, which Loken (2018) argues is an effect of women's legitimising and capability-building effects (p. 188). Braithwaite and Ruiz (2018, p. 3) also find that the presence of female combatants makes armed groups more likely to succeed, as it decreases the likelihood of governments winning in civil conflict. The scope of their research, however, is strictly restricted to female presence in combat roles: this can be limiting, as women can be identified in a variety of positions in armed groups, as highlighted by previous literature (Henshaw, 2016; Wood & Thomas, 2017). Finally, Chenoweth (2019a, pp. 4, 6, 27) expands on previous research by Loken (2018), Thomas and Bond (2015), and Henshaw (2016), and further conceptualises various forms of female participation in political campaigns: frontline, support, symbolic, leadership and figurehead roles. Chenoweth's (2019a) research report on the Women in Resistance (WiRe) dataset includes an empirical analysis of the relationship between women's presence in violent and nonviolent movements and campaign success, among other variables. Nonetheless, it does not systematically study how women's participation in different roles affects a campaign's outcome (Chenoweth, 2019a).

This paper thus aims to be the first large-N quantitative study of the relationship between several types of women's roles in armed campaigns and their outcomes, as there is no such prior

research. Mason (1992), Kampwirth (2002), McKay (2005) and Alison (2009) conduct small-N or case studies. Henshaw (2016, p. 8) only considers a random sample of 72 rebel groups from the post-Cold War period. Thomas and Bond (2015), Wood and Thomas (2017) and Braithwaite and Ruiz (2018) utilise large-N datasets but merely focus on women in combat roles. Henshaw (2016, p. 7) considers a variety of women's roles, including leadership, combatant, and non-combatant positions, but does not link women's presence in these roles to the outcome of political movements. The studies which have done so are limited in scope. Loken's (2018) small-N study is limited to 146 rebel insurgencies from 1960 to 2016 and overlooks other types of violent political mobilisation. Chenoweth's (2019a) larger research includes 338 maximalist campaigns active between 1945 and 2014, yet focuses on nonviolent movements. In addition, Chenoweth's (2019a) and Loken's (2018) studies have not been peer-reviewed, as they are a report and a doctoral dissertation, respectively.

The extant scholarship lacks a theoretical and empirical analysis of how variations in women's roles in violent political campaigns affect campaign outcomes. A research question thus arises from these gaps in the academic literature: *how do different forms of women's participation affect a violent campaign's outcome?*

3. Theoretical framework

This paper's conceptualisation of violent political campaigns primarily builds upon research conducted by Thomas and Bond (2015) and Chenoweth (2019a). Thomas and Bond's (2015, p. 491) unit of analysis is the *violent political organisation*, which includes rebel, terrorist, paramilitary and self-defence groups that employ organised political violence. Chenoweth's (2019a, p. 25) definition of *resistance campaigns* further specifies these groups' political aims: they may seek the removal of a government, the expulsion of a colonial power or foreign military occupation, secession or territorial self-determination. *Violent political*

campaigns (VPCs), which constitute this research's unit of analysis, can therefore be understood as politically motivated, organised resistance movements that employ violent tactics.

Women's involvement in VPCs can take various forms (Chenoweth, 2019a, pp. 5-6). Chenoweth (2019a, p. 5) merges the previous literature and constructs a typology of female participation that comprises four categories: frontline, symbolic, leadership, and support roles (Henshaw, 2016; Thomas & Bond, 2015; Wood & Thomas, 2017). As this paper wishes to highlight female agency in VPCs, it only considers women's active political participation in a campaign: the study, therefore, focuses on women in frontline, symbolic and leadership roles. While women also take on "supporting" roles in VPCs, these will not be analysed, as they are often short-term, informal, and difficult to measure (Poloni-Staudinger & Ortals, 2013, p. 25). Moreover, Chenoweth (2019a) finds no statistically significant correlation between women in supporting roles and campaign success.

Women can be considered most actively involved in armed resistance when in frontline combat or leadership positions (Chenoweth, 2019a, p. 1; Henshaw, 2016, p. 8). Nonetheless, women can be active members of a movement as "symbolic" figures as well, publicly promoting their cause through outlets such as social media, television or newspapers. Such public advocacy can be crucial to a campaign's success, as women can take advantage of gender narratives by assuming symbolic roles as mothers or martyrs to legitimise their cause (Benford & Snow, 2000; Braithwaite & Ruiz, 2018). Based on Chenoweth's definition (2019a), *frontline* participation is thus defined in this research as women's presence in combat roles. Women in *symbolic* roles are those publicly advocating for the campaign in the news and social media (Chenoweth 2019a, p. 28). Finally, women's *leadership* is intended as the presence of women as campaign leaders or as members of the primary leadership group (Chenoweth 2019a, p. 29).

Prior research suggests that female participation is favourable for the outcome of both nonviolent and violent movements (Chenoweth, 2019a; Chenoweth, 2021; Kampwirth, 2002; Loken, 2018; Marks & Chenoweth, 2020, p. 2). Some literature suggests that specific types of women's involvement may have a positive influence in bringing about the success of VPCs (Braithwaite & Ruiz, 2018; Chenoweth, 2019a; Chenoweth, 2021, p. 161; Kampwirth, 2002; Loken, 2018; Marks & Chenoweth, 2020, p. 6). This paper proposes two gendered mechanisms of *mobilisation* and *legitimacy* to explain how some types of women's participation make a violent political campaign's success likelier.

3.1 The mobilisation mechanism

Women in frontline roles may increase the likelihood of campaign success through a *mobilisation mechanism*, which comprises three elements: *mass mobilisation*, *loyalty shifts* and *social capital*. Several studies indicate the existence of a positive relationship between women's frontline participation and VPC success. Braithwaite and Ruiz (2018, p. 2), for instance, find that rebellions where women are present in combat roles are more likely to achieve their goals. Loken (2018, p. 191) also claims that women's frontline participation is a significant indicator of rebel victory. Additionally, Chenoweth (2019a, p. 4) confirms that more women in frontline roles positively affects violent campaigns' success, as is further highlighted in a research brief by Marks and Chenoweth (2020, p. 2). A *mobilisation mechanism* may help explain this relationship, as described in Figure 1.

Several scholars indicate that *mass mobilisation* is crucial for violent and nonviolent campaigns (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2008; Dahl et al., 2021; Kampwirth, 2002; Marks & Chenoweth, 2020). Orazani and Leidner (2018) underline the importance of considering mobilisation potential when analysing the effectiveness of social movements. Chenoweth and Stephan (2008) and Dahl, Gates, González and Gleditsch (2021) also argue that mass

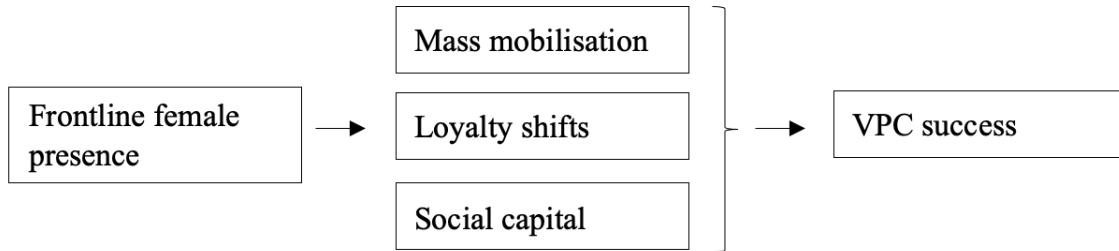
mobilisation is necessary for campaign success. When women join a movement, the number of participants increases, making mass mobilisation likelier to be achieved through numerical advantage: it follows that VPCs benefit from women's participation (Kampwirth, 2002, p. 9; Marks & Chenoweth, 2020, p. 2). When women join VPCs in combat roles, their frontline participation is relevant in increasing a campaign's chances of success by numerically expanding the participant base (Chenoweth, 2019a, p. 1; Henshaw, 2016, p. 2). This comprises the mechanism's mass mobilisation component.

Loyalty shifts also matter for a movement's success, as research has found that women's presence in frontline roles stimulates loyalty shifts by the population and security forces (Chenoweth, 2019a, pp. 2, 13; Pearlman, 2016, p. 892). Chenoweth (2019a, pp. 2, 13) shows that women's frontline participation does not merely contribute to a campaign numerically, but actively catalyses broader mobilisation by prompting loyalty shifts from opposing forces. As shown in Pearlman's (2016, p. 892) qualitative study of moral identity and protest cascades in the Arab Spring, some men reported joining protests after seeing women at the forefront of demonstrations, as they felt compelled to join because of their moral identity and self-respect. Similar loyalty shifts and cascade effects could be at work in VPCs where women's frontline presence solidifies social ties. This is the loyalty shift element of the mechanism.

Finally, Braithwaite and Ruiz (2018, p. 2) provide evidence of a positive correlation between frontline women and campaign success through horizontal ties which enhance *social capital*: women in frontline positions strengthen social capital among group members and the wider population. This would explain the association between female frontline presence and campaign success that previous literature suggested (Chenoweth, 2019a; Loken, 2018). Female combatants strengthen a VPC's horizontal ties to the local community, increasing societal support for the group (Braithwaite & Ruiz, 2018, pp. 1-2). Such social links with the wider

population may also help the VPC receive more resources and recruits (Braithwaite & Ruiz, 2018, pp. 1-2). Women in a campaign's frontline roles thus constitute a source of social capital that may be a conducive element to a VPC's success.

Figure 1. The mobilisation mechanism.



Women's presence in frontline combat increases the number of participants, builds social capital and encourages loyalty shifts. These elements constitute a *mobilisation mechanism* that links women in frontline roles to VPC success. The first hypothesis follows.

Hypothesis 1: Women in frontline positions increase a violent campaign's likelihood of success.

3.2 The legitimacy mechanism

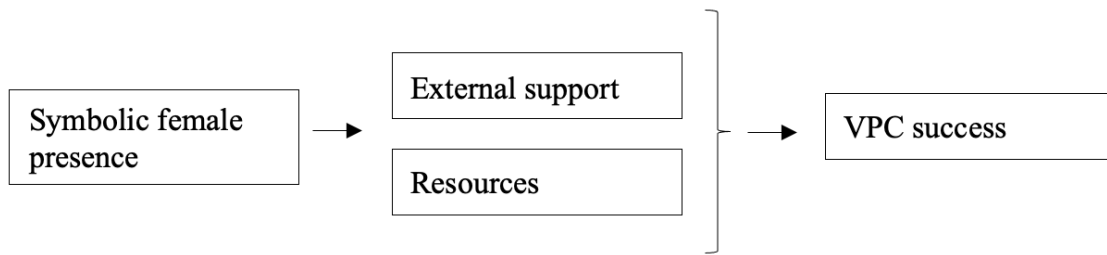
This paper further posits that the presence of women in symbolic roles makes a violent campaign likelier to succeed through a *legitimacy mechanism* which enhances *external support* and *resources*, as shown in Figure 2. Literature on civil and armed resistance has underlined the importance of framing and legitimacy for a campaign's success, as they can elicit crucial societal and international support and resources (Benford & Snow, 2000, pp. 611-613; Marks & Chenoweth, 2020, p. 4; Wasow, 2020, p. 641).

Several studies have shown how women in political movements often utilise gendered narratives to increase legitimacy, which in turn enhances *external support*, both domestic and

international (Joshi, 2022, p. 205; Sidwell, Hafen & Evans, 2006, pp. 57-58; Viterna & Fallon, 2008, p. 671). Female participants in various resistance movements re-appropriate gendered narratives of maternity and femininity in anti-regime contestation (Waylen, 1994). They may portray themselves as martyrs, for instance, or as vulnerable mothers who want the best for their country and children (Joshi, 2022; Ray & Korteweg, 1999; Viterna & Fallon, 2008; Waylen, 1994). In some cases, the external, international support brought about by these legitimising narratives proved to be decisive (Waylen, 1994, p. 338). For example, cases of resistance in Cambodia and South America demonstrated how female participants' use of narratives related to motherhood, purity and self-sacrifice created widespread external support, making it more challenging for regimes to formally justify repression (Joshi, 2022, pp. 203-205; Ray & Korteweg, 1999, p. 51).

These legitimising narratives can be used by VPCs to increase their legitimacy and reputation abroad, prompting support from the international community (Benford & Snow, 2000, pp. 611-613; Braithwaite & Ruiz, 2018, p. 2; Joshi, 2022, p. 205; Ray & Korteweg, 1999, p. 51; Sidwell et al., 2006, pp. 57-58; Viterna & Fallon, 2008; Waylen, 1994, p. 338). When female participants provide legitimacy to a campaign, they enhance vertical ties of international support abroad (Braithwaite & Ruiz, 2018). This, in turn, can bring about more resources from external actors for the campaign, and occasionally even the promise of favourable external intervention, which can be a deterrent for the resistance campaign's opponents (Braithwaite & Ruiz, 2018, pp. 1-2). International legitimacy can be crucial: Chenoweth and Stephan (2008, p. 20) claim that resistance campaigns that garner support from external states are over three times more likely to achieve success.

Figure 2. The legitimacy mechanism.



To reap these benefits, a movement must thus promote legitimising gendered narratives through visible female participants. Frontline positions may not be visible enough, as rebels often act undercover or through covert tactics. Women publicly advocating for a violent political campaign’s legitimacy in the media, and thus in symbolic roles, improve a VPC’s likelihood of success by enhancing external support and resources. A second hypothesis ensues.

Hypothesis 2: Women in symbolic positions increase a violent campaign’s likelihood of success.

This logic might reasonably apply to women in leadership roles as well, as they are also visible, can help frame a campaign as legitimate, and further its success through a legitimacy mechanism. However, prior studies on female leadership in violent campaigns have yielded contradictory results on the topic. Loken (2018, pp. 188, 193) finds that the presence of female leaders helps rebels win, and observes that armed groups with female leadership have a significantly higher chance of experiencing victory rather than defeat. Chenoweth (2019a), conversely, reports no statistically significant correlation between female leadership and campaign success. Though Chenoweth’s (2019a) findings only concern nonviolent campaigns, it is worth testing the association through a third hypothesis to assess these rival theories.

Hypothesis 3a: The presence of women in leadership positions is positively associated with a violent campaign’s success.

A negative relationship between female leadership and VPC success is also worth exploring. Having a woman as a leader, for instance, may not be perceived as advantageous among an armed group's members. Given misogynistic assumptions about women's inadequacy in warfare, male combatants, who generally make up the majority of violent campaigns, may be less willing or motivated to fight under female leadership. Furthermore, the legitimacy of a resistance movement led by one or more women could also be disputed by other actors due to similarly sexist reasonings. In a male-dominated political world, female leaders may struggle more than their male peers in having their demands met. A final hypothesis is hence posited. *Hypothesis 3b: The presence of women in leadership positions is negatively associated with a violent campaign's success.*

4. Research design

The literature review reveals the absence of a systematic study of the relationship between women's involvement in violent political campaigns and their success. Research on women in violent movements consisted of either qualitative comparative or case studies, or quantitative papers with small samples, often only of rebel groups (Alison, 2009; Braithwaite & Ruiz, 2018; Chenoweth, 2019a; Henshaw, 2016; Kampwirth, 2002; Loken, 2018; Mason, 1992; McKay, 2005; Thomas & Bond, 2015; Wood & Thomas, 2017). To fill this gap, this paper takes a quantitative approach and conducts a cross-country regression analysis to test its hypotheses on women in resistance campaigns worldwide. Its large-N approach is aimed at obtaining generalisable findings and reducing selection bias.

4.1 Case and data selection

This research's timeframe and case selection are dependent on the few collections of data available on female participation and resistance movements. To ensure the study is large-

N, the regression is run on a global dataset of 168 VPCs spanning almost seventy years, from 1945 to 2014: this is made possible by combining the Women in Resistance (WiRe) and Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem 14) datasets. WiRe is the only current dataset indicating women's participation in political campaigns worldwide. It is an extension of the Nonviolent and Violent Conflict Outcomes (NAVCO 1.2) dataset, which documents mobilisations and their outcomes (Chenoweth & Wiley Shay, 2019). The WiRe dataset, like this research, takes the campaign as the unit of analysis. It provides a sample of 338 violent and nonviolent maximalist campaigns from 1945 to 2014, permitting a large-N cross-country analysis of mobilisations. This research utilises its data on violent campaigns specifically, allowing for comprehensive quantitative research on female involvement in political violence.

The V-Dem 14 dataset covers worldwide data from 1789 to 2023, and is here used to include control variables and fixed effects to the analysis. Its units of analysis are countries; for the purpose of this research, however, it is merged with the WiRe data by matching their indicators for location ("location" in WiRe and "country_name" in V-Dem 14) and year ("byear" in WiRe and "year" in V-Dem 14). The ensuing dataset is then filtered based on whether or not a campaign was violent through the WiRe "viol" variable, thus only selecting VPCs. This results in a final dataset of 168 VPCs in 92 countries ranging from 1945 to 2014, containing information on campaigns and on the socioeconomic and political context at the onset of the mobilisation in the countries where they took place.

4.2 Operationalisation and statistical models

As this research investigates variation in violent political campaign outcomes, the dependent variable of its analysis is campaign success. This is operationalised with the WiRe dataset's dichotomous "success" variable, which indicates whether a campaign's goals were achieved (1) or not (0) (Chenoweth & Wiley Shay, 2019).

The regression tests whether and how campaign success varies due to three independent variables: women's presence in frontline roles, women's presence in symbolic roles, and women's presence in leadership roles. They are operationalised based on variables from the WiRe dataset, which has appropriate indicators for women's roles. Women's participation in frontline roles is operationalised with the binary "frontlinerole" variable, which indicates whether women were present in a campaign's frontline combat roles (1) or not (0) (Chenoweth, 2019b, p. 4). The dichotomous "symbolicrole" variable is taken as an indicator for women's presence in symbolic roles, as it reports whether women advocate for a campaign in the news or social media (1) or not (0) (Chenoweth, 2019b, p. 5). Lastly, the binary variable "leadership", which signals women's involvement in a movement's active leadership (1) or not (0), is an apt indicator for female presence in leadership or command positions (Chenoweth, 2019b, p. 5). An Ordinary Least Squares regression will hence test the relationship between the dependent variable of *success* and the three independent variables of *frontline role*, *symbolic role* and *leadership*.

The analysis also controls for potential confounding variables. Woods and Thomas (2017, pp. 31, 42) argue that a rebel group's ideology impacts whether women join a group. As this may also influence what roles they may have within that group, and in turn affect the campaign outcome, the analysis includes the WiRe variable of gender ideology ("ge_ideol"). This allows to control for whether the campaign's ideology promotes the exclusion of women from public life (1) or not (0). By including the V-Dem 14 dataset, the regression also incorporates several other controls to avoid overlooking potentially relevant variables. These variables, which may influence campaign outcomes, include population ("e_pop", divided by one million and recoded to "new_population" to obtain lower coefficients) and GDP per capita ("e_gdppc"), as well as political and civil freedom status ("e_fh_status"), state authority over

territory (“v2svstter”), and gender equality in respect for civil liberties (“v2clgencl”) in the countries where the campaigns occur (Coppedge et al., 2024).

The analysis is subsequently run including fixed effects for each country (“location”), since several of the campaigns occurred in the same country at different times. Country fixed effects account for each country’s constant characteristics and ensure the outcome variable of success is not influenced by country-level variables that remain unvaried throughout different campaigns.

This paper utilises an Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression, which is ideal for estimating whether there is a correlation between women’s presence in VPCs and their outcomes. To examine the effect of different forms of female participation, the regression is run in five models. The first three take one independent variable at a time, together with the aforementioned control variables. Model 1 thus takes women in frontline roles (“frontlinerole”) as the independent variable, Model 2 observes women in symbolic roles (“symbolicrole”), and Model 3 focuses on women in leadership roles (“leadership”). Model 4 incorporates all three covariates in addition to the control variables. Finally, Model 5 adds country fixed effects to the previous analysis.

5. Empirical analysis

Due to some missing values for certain countries and resistance movements, the final number of campaigns that can be included in the analysis is 77. This constitutes a relatively small sample and further justifies utilising a linear regression rather than a logit model, as OLS is less sensitive to a smaller number of observations.

Table 1 provides the results for each of the five linear regression models. Observations of campaign success are first regressed solely on the presence of women in frontline, symbolic

or leadership roles (respectively, Model 1, Model 2 and Model 3) and control variables. Model 4 includes female presence in each role and control variables, while Model 5 adds country fixed effects to these covariates.

Prior to interpreting findings, it is necessary to verify whether the data violates any assumptions. Running the regression and some tests reveals that the data respects assumptions of linearity, normality of residuals, homoscedasticity, and no multicollinearity or autocorrelation. Furthermore, there are only a few outliers and no influential cases. The data is thus reliable, and the regression's results can be considered valid.

Table 1: Linear regression models of the relationship between types of women's participation and VPC success.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
(Constant)	-0.122 (0.389)	-0.123 (0.378)	-0.206 (0.362)	-0.151 (0.371)	1.400 (1.147)
Frontline role	0.074 (0.026)			-0.125 (0.136)	-0.605 (0.344)
Symbolic role		0.137 (0.106)		0.052 (0.111)	-0.042 (0.219)
Leadership role			0.281** (0.096)	0.311** (0.113)	0.428 (0.254)
Gender ideology of campaign	-0.069 (0.089)	-0.065 (0.088)	-0.066 (0.084)	-0.069 (0.085)	-0.316 (0.217)
Population	-1.432 (4.108)	-2.194 (4.123)	0.663 (3.908)	0.930 (4.131)	88.241 (60.221)
GDP per capita	-0.012 (0.012)	-0.017 (0.012)	-0.005 (0.011)	-0.005 (0.013)	0.112 (0.085)
Political and civil freedom status	0.112 (0.089)	0.129 (0.088)	0.141 (0.084)	0.154 (0.086)	-0.260 (0.307)
State authority over territory	0.001 (0.003)	0.001 (0.003)	0.000 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.003)	0.002 (0.008)
Gender equality in respect for civil liberties	-0.051 (0.047)	-0.038 (0.046)	-0.068 (0.044)	-0.061 (0.046)	-0.011 (0.210)
Country Fixed Effects	No	No	No	No	Yes
R ²	0.097	0.114	0.193	0.205	0.716
Adj. R ²	0.005	0.024	0.112	0.098	-0.078
N	77	77	77	77	77

Note: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in brackets.

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05

Model 1 establishes that women's presence in frontline combat leads to a 0.074 unit increase in campaign success. Though this shows a moderate positive correlation with

campaign success, it is not statistically significant ($p = 0.551$). A similar relationship is apparent in Model 2, where the presence of women in symbolic roles is associated with a 0.137 unit increase in VPC victory. This effect is larger but has no statistical significance either ($p = 0.200$). Conversely, Model 3 demonstrates that female leadership is positively correlated with VPC victory, and that this relationship is statistically significant, meaning female leaders in violent resistance increase the likelihood of campaign success by 0.281 units ($p = 0.004$).

Results change remarkably when simultaneously estimating the effect of women in frontline, symbolic and leadership roles on campaign success in Model 4. The coefficient for women in frontline roles suggests a negative correlation with campaign victory, decreasing VPC success by 0.125 units ($p = 0.360$). Albeit not statistically significant, this calls into question the hypothesised direction of the relationship between women in frontline roles and campaign success. Female presence in symbolic positions maintains a moderate, though not significant, correlation with campaign success: women in symbolic roles result in a 0.052 unit increase in VPC victory ($p = 0.642$). Once more, women's presence in leadership roles is the only statistically significant coefficient and shows an even stronger association with VPC success at the 99% significance level: female leadership causes a 0.311 unit increase in campaign success ($p = 0.008$). These findings suggest that having women with leadership responsibilities has a positive effect on violent political campaign victory, while women's presence in combat or symbolic capacities does not.

When adding country fixed effects to the regression analysis (Model 5), none of the predictor variables have a statistically significant explanatory effect on the dependent variable. Female frontline combatants have a negative correlation to campaign success, as their presence leads to a 0.605 unit decrease in VPCs victory. However, this relationship is not statistically significant ($p = 0.094$). The presence of women in symbolic roles has a smaller, non-significant

effect, and is associated with a 0.042 unit decrease in campaign success ($p = 0.850$). Female leadership, conversely, maintains a positive correlation to the outcome variable, although not in a statistically significant manner: women's involvement in leadership positions results in campaign victory increasing by 0.428 units ($p = 0.107$). Model 5 has the highest R^2 value, which indicates its proportion of explained variance, making it the regression model which best explains variation in the outcome variable. Its results can therefore be considered the most accurate. It is also important to note that none of the control variables have a statistically significant effect on campaign success.

6. Discussion

Overall, the empirical analysis does not support the hypotheses guiding this research, except Hypothesis 3a according to Model 4. Based on the mobilisation mechanism, Hypothesis 1 theorised a positive correlation between women in frontline positions and a violent campaign's likelihood of success, and is tested in Models 1, 4 and 5. Model 1, which only accounts for control variables, female frontline presence leads to a non-significant increase in campaign success: this confirms the relationship's hypothesised direction, but not with statistical significance. In Model 4, holding all other covariates and control variables constant, the correlation takes the opposite direction, with women in frontline roles resulting in a statistically non-significant decrease in success. Model 5, which includes country fixed effects, shows an even stronger non-significant negative relationship between frontline presence and campaign success. Consequently, Hypothesis 1 is rejected.

Hypothesis 2 expected the presence of women in symbolic positions to increase a violent campaign's likelihood of success. Models 2 and 4 do find a positive correlation between the two variables, but it is not statistically significant. When fixed effects are included in the

analysis, the relationship becomes negative and is again not significant. Hypothesis 2 is hence rejected as well.

According to Hypothesis 3a, the presence of women in leadership positions should be associated with a violent campaign's success. Indeed, statistically significant results from Models 3 and 4 establish that female leadership is correlated positively to campaign success. This effect is not statistically significant in Model 5, but becomes stronger. This is in contrast with what Hypothesis 3b posited, as it expected female leadership presence to decrease campaign success. According to Model 4, Hypothesis 3a is not rejected, while Hypothesis 3b is.

In short, when controlling for potentially confounding variables without country fixed effects, female presence in VPC leadership is a significant catalyst for campaign success. Women in frontline roles reduce the likelihood of campaign victory, and those in symbolic roles increase it, but neither of these effects is statistically significant.

When adding country-level fixed effects (Model 5), surprisingly, it becomes clear that only women's presence in leadership roles is correlated positively with campaign success, and not in a significant manner. The consistent positive effect female leadership has on campaign success somewhat corroborates the theoretical framework underlying Hypothesis 3a. To some extent, women's presence in leadership roles with VPCs increases their likelihood of success. Nonetheless, as these results are not statistically significant, correlation can be established, but not causation. According to Model 5, the null hypotheses for Hypotheses 1, 2, 3a and 3b cannot be rejected. These findings raise questions about why the regression results differ so greatly from what was expected by the theoretical framework.

One puzzling observation is the negative association between women's presence in frontline and symbolic roles and campaign success when accounting for country fixed effects. Research by Braithwaite and Ruiz (2018, p. 3) may shed some light on the topic: similarly to this paper, they also establish a positive correlation between female combatants and rebel group victory, but do not find statistical significance for this effect. They do, however, find statistically significant evidence that the presence of female fighters decreases the likelihood of government victory against resistance groups (Braithwaite & Ruiz, 2018, p. 3). This effect is conditional on the groups' mode of recruitment, and only holds when women voluntarily take up combat roles (Braithwaite & Ruiz, 2018, p. 5). Given these findings, voluntary recruitment could be expected to vary the results of this paper's empirical analysis. To verify this, Models 4 and 5 are run twice more, once including voluntary female recruitment (operationalised as the binary "voluntary" variable from WiRe) as a control variable, and once including it as an interaction term for the independent variables of frontline and symbolic roles. Nevertheless, this does not yield interesting results: the correlations remain non-significant and maintain the same directions as reported in Table 1. Perhaps running an analysis on a larger number of cases, as suggested by Braithwaite and Ruiz (2018, p. 6), could result in different findings.

Another alternative theory could be that, given that societal misogyny is widespread in many of the countries where the analysed VPCs occurred, female participants may weaken a resistance movement's reputation and political efficacy. In societies where women are not valued as political actors due to a variety of cultural or religious reasons, their presence in highly visible roles as frontline fighters or public advocates might delegitimise an armed group's political leverage. Nonetheless, as there is currently no literature on these mechanisms, it is difficult to substantiate this potential explanation.

7. Conclusion

As civil and armed mobilisations gain salience in several regions of the world, failing to examine how women take part in them means overlooking over half of the global population's involvement and may lead to an incomplete understanding of political movements. Scholars of resistance campaigns have historically excluded female participation from their analyses, and literature applying a gendered lens to conflict studies has predominantly focused on women in nonviolent conflict or on the circumscribed topic of female presence in rebel groups. This research thus contributes to the extant scholarship by exploring the relationship between different types of female participation in violent political campaigns and the outcomes of these movements. It proposes a theoretical framework comprising mechanisms which lead to two hypotheses. Following a *mobilisation* mechanism, the presence of women in frontline combat is hypothesised to improve a violent campaign's likelihood of success. A *legitimacy* mechanism also suggests that women in symbolic positions may have a similar effect on an armed campaign's outcome. Two final hypotheses explore why female leadership may increase or decrease a campaign's chances of success. An empirical analysis consisting of five OLS regression models progressively includes control variables and country-fixed effects.

The results do not fully confirm the hypotheses: female presence in frontline and symbolic positions is not associated with a statistically significant higher likelihood of VPC effectiveness. Women's participation in leadership roles has a positive influence on VPC success in only one of the regression models. Accordingly, causation between different types of women's participation and campaign success cannot be established. For this reason, given the question of *how do different forms of women's participation affect a violent campaign's outcome?*, this research finds that while female involvement, particularly in leadership positions, is generally conducive to VPC success, women's presence or absence in other specific positions does not cause any significant variation.

Though non-significant results could be interpreted as evidence that women, compared to men, do not significantly contribute to the success of VPCs, abundant literature has underlined that this is not the case: women's general presence contributes to violent and nonviolent resistance campaigns' chances of victory (Braithwaite & Ruiz, 2018; Chenoweth, 2019a; Chenoweth, 2021; Kampwirth, 2002; Loken, 2018; Marks & Chenoweth, 2020). This empirical analysis merely shows that women's specific involvement in frontline and symbolic positions does not have any particular effect on VPC effectiveness, while female participation in leadership roles might.

The overall non-significance of the findings could be attributed to this research's limitations. Though the utilised dataset includes 168 violent political campaigns, due to some missing data the regression analysis only runs on 77 cases, a relatively small sample. This is ascribable to practical constraints, as data specifying female involvement in VPCs, or the absence thereof, is meagre. Since a low number of observations affects confidence intervals, the research's reduced sample size may explain why significance was not found. Findings from a larger database with a greater number of cases would likely be more accurate. This constitutes a possible avenue for further research.

Moreover, due to the scarce availability of data on women in VPCs in more recent years, this study's temporal scope is limited to the years from 1945 to 2014. Given that several civil uprisings and resistance campaigns have occurred since 2014, replicating this research on a wider timeframe that includes more recent years would enhance the validity of its results.

Another issue that future studies could address is the limitation of conceptualising and operationalising campaign success dichotomously. VPCs rarely achieve all of their goals, and utilising a more nuanced dependent variable might lead to a more comprehensive understanding of what makes a resistance group succeed. Unfortunately, WiRe is currently the only dataset

collecting statistics on gendered dynamics in political resistance movements, and it relies on the NAVCO dataset's dichotomous indicators for the success and non-success of resistance campaigns. Ideally, new studies could measure to what extent each type of role women take in a VPC is associated with full, partial or no campaign success.

Though this research does not provide significant findings on how different women's roles support violent political campaigns, it contributes to the field of conflict and mobilisation studies by reasserting how female presence is generally favourable for the success of resistance movements. This is relevant for national or intergovernmental policymakers and stakeholders involved in peacebuilding: recognising women's agency as combatants or participants in armed resistance highlights the necessity for a greater inclusion of women in conflict mediation and resolution, as well as in combatant rehabilitation programmes. It is time to overcome outdated notions of women as passive participants of nonviolent resistance only, and to instead study their full involvement in armed conflict as well.

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Appendix

Dataset and output

The dataset of 168 violent political campaigns obtained by merging WiRe and V-Dem 14 and its complete regression output are available online at the following link:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/7rchiz84c573dnmc7smux/ALGrLaZH96CHWevGx4QGN54?rlkey=rkpaab4gjz8kvzo1ivnc1z847&st=rvxwhv7d&dl=0>

SPSS syntax for replicability

Model 1.	<pre> REGRESSION /MISSING LISTWISE /STATISTICS COEFF OUTS CI(95) R ANOVA COLLIN TOL CHANGE /CRITERIA=PIN(.05) POUT(.10) /NOORIGIN /DEPENDENT success /METHOD=ENTER frontlinerole ge_ideol new_population e_gdppc e_fh_status v2svstterr v2clgenc1 /RESIDUALS DURBIN. </pre>
Model 2.	<pre> REGRESSION /MISSING LISTWISE /STATISTICS COEFF OUTS CI(95) R ANOVA COLLIN TOL CHANGE /CRITERIA=PIN(.05) POUT(.10) /NOORIGIN /DEPENDENT success /METHOD=ENTER symbolicrole ge_ideol new_population e_gdppc e_fh_status v2svstterr v2clgenc1 /RESIDUALS DURBIN. </pre>
Model 3.	<pre> REGRESSION /MISSING LISTWISE /STATISTICS COEFF OUTS CI(95) R ANOVA COLLIN TOL CHANGE /CRITERIA=PIN(.05) POUT(.10) /NOORIGIN /DEPENDENT success /METHOD=ENTER leadership ge_ideol new_population e_gdppc e_fh_status v2svstterr v2clgenc1 /RESIDUALS DURBIN. </pre>
Model 4.	<pre> REGRESSION /MISSING LISTWISE </pre>

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Model 5.	<pre> REGRESSION /MISSING LISTWISE /STATISTICS COEFF OUTS CI(95) R ANOVA COLLIN TOL CHANGE /CRITERIA=PIN(.05) POUT(.10) /NOORIGIN /DEPENDENT success /METHOD=ENTER frontlinerole symbolicrole leadership ge_ideol new_population e_gdppc e_fh_status v2svstterr v2clgencl country_binarydummy_2 country_binarydummy_3 country_binarydummy_4 country_binarydummy_5 country_binarydummy_6 country_binarydummy_7 country_binarydummy_8 country_binarydummy_9 country_binarydummy_10 country_binarydummy_11 country_binarydummy_12 country_binarydummy_13 </pre>

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<p>Model 5 with voluntary recruitment (<i>voluntary</i>) as interaction term for <i>frontline</i> and <i>symbolic</i>.</p>	<p>COMPUTE vol_frontline=frontlinerole * voluntary. EXECUTE. COMPUTE vol_symbolic=symbolicrole * voluntary. EXECUTE. REGRESSION /MISSING LISTWISE /STATISTICS COEFF OUTS CI(95) R ANOVA COLLIN TOL CHANGE /CRITERIA=PIN(.05) POUT(.10)</p>

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	/RESIDUALS DURBIN.
Model 5 with voluntary recruitment (<i>voluntary</i>) as control variable.	REGRESSION /MISSING LISTWISE /STATISTICS COEFF OUTS CI(95) R ANOVA COLLIN TOL CHANGE /CRITERIA=PIN(.05) POUT(.10) /NOORIGIN /DEPENDENT success /METHOD=ENTER frontlinerole symbolicrole leadership ge_ideol new_population e_gdppc e_fh_status v2svsterr v2clgencl voluntary country_binarydummy_2 country_binarydummy_3 country_binarydummy_4 country_binarydummy_5 country_binarydummy_6 country_binarydummy_7 country_binarydummy_8 country_binarydummy_9 country_binarydummy_10 country_binarydummy_11 country_binarydummy_12 country_binarydummy_13 country_binarydummy_14 country_binarydummy_15 country_binarydummy_16 country_binarydummy_17 country_binarydummy_18 country_binarydummy_19 country_binarydummy_20 country_binarydummy_21 country_binarydummy_22 country_binarydummy_23 country_binarydummy_24 country_binarydummy_25 country_binarydummy_26 country_binarydummy_27 country_binarydummy_28 country_binarydummy_29 country_binarydummy_30 country_binarydummy_31 country_binarydummy_32 country_binarydummy_33 country_binarydummy_34 country_binarydummy_35 country_binarydummy_36 country_binarydummy_37 country_binarydummy_38 country_binarydummy_39 country_binarydummy_40 country_binarydummy_41 country_binarydummy_42 country_binarydummy_43 country_binarydummy_44 country_binarydummy_45 country_binarydummy_46 country_binarydummy_47 country_binarydummy_48 country_binarydummy_49 country_binarydummy_50 country_binarydummy_51 country_binarydummy_52 country_binarydummy_53 country_binarydummy_54 country_binarydummy_55 country_binarydummy_56 country_binarydummy_57 country_binarydummy_58 country_binarydummy_59 country_binarydummy_60 country_binarydummy_61 country_binarydummy_62 country_binarydummy_63 country_binarydummy_64 country_binarydummy_65 country_binarydummy_66 country_binarydummy_67 country_binarydummy_68 country_binarydummy_69 country_binarydummy_70 country_binarydummy_71 country_binarydummy_72 country_binarydummy_73 country_binarydummy_74 country_binarydummy_75 country_binarydummy_76 country_binarydummy_77 country_binarydummy_78 country_binarydummy_79 country_binarydummy_80 country_binarydummy_81

	country_binarydummy_82 country_binarydummy_84 country_binarydummy_86 country_binarydummy_88 country_binarydummy_90 /RESIDUALS DURBIN.	country_binarydummy_83 country_binarydummy_85 country_binarydummy_87 country_binarydummy_89
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